

Safety ...Off The Job

Microwave Oven Tips

Microwave ovens are almost as common to a household as a toaster. They offer a busy family a convenient way to enjoy a hot meal in minutes.

But because microwaves have become so widely used it is easy to forget the unique safety hazards associated with these special ovens.

It is important to read the manual that comes with any new appliance. A manual will help you understand how to operate your new microwave in the safest and most efficient way possible.

Here are a few hazards to consider when using your microwave:

- **Do not operate a damaged microwave oven.**

Dangerous microwaves or MWVs will escape from any opening such as cracks, holes or the open door. The door of your microwave oven should have one or more safety switches called interlocks which turn the oven off automatically as the door opens. Make sure these interlocks are not faulty. Check for loose or bent door hinges, missing screws and ineffective door latches. Make sure the door is not sprung, warped or misaligned.

- **Keep your oven clean.**

Electrical arcing or sparks which can lead to fire can occur when food

residue is in the oven. Your microwave is cooking the leftover food just as much as it is cooking the new food.

- **Ensure food is cooked thoroughly.**

Make sure meat, poultry and fish are cooked thoroughly to avoid salmonella and other types of bacteria. Let microwaved food stand covered for a few minutes. This will allow heat from the inside to expand throughout the food, completing the cooking process.

- **Don't try deep-fat frying.**

Microwave ovens don't allow control over the temperature of the oil, which can spatter or boil over when overheated. If moisture were to reach the oil while your hand is inside the oven, the popping or boiling oil would have a close-range target.

- **Let steam escape from covered dishes.**

When you cover a dish with plastic wrap before microwaving, leave a corner open so steam can escape. A tight seal could allow steam to build up in the dish causing painful consequences when you remove the food from the oven. Don't let plastic wrap touch the food. Plasticizers from some wraps can migrate into the fats in foods. Pierce the skin of

unpeeled potatoes, sausages, eggs you plan to cook in their shells and similar foods, allowing steam to escape.

Consult your manual to learn the best way to use your microwave with such foods.

- **Use microwave-safe utensils.**

If you use old margarine tubs to store leftover foods and then pop these in the microwave for a quick dinner, remember some hot foods can melt the tub. Don't use recycled paper products in the microwave. Some recycled paper contains metal which can cause arcing. Do not use metal utensils in your microwave because this will also cause arcing.

- **Supervise your children.**

Supervise your children when they use the microwave to make sure they clearly understand how to operate it. While some older children may understand its workings, younger ones may not. Avoid warming baby bottles in your microwave especially ones with plastic liners or holders. Microwave ovens heat liquids in layers causing uneven temperatures to occur.

There's more to operating a microwave than you think. Make sure your family knows how to use this handy device safely before a serious accident happens.

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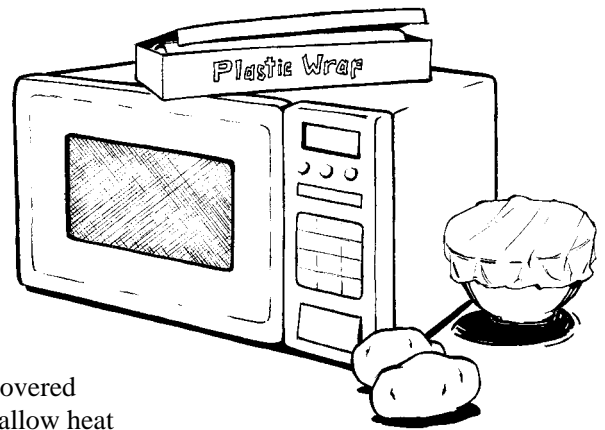
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